DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 211 936 CS 006 443

AUTHOR Spodek, Bernard
TITLE How Should Reading Fit into a Pre-School Curriculum? Literacy: Meeting the Challenge.
INSTITUTION Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C. Right to Read Program.
PUB DATE 80
NOTE 21p.; Paper presented at the National Right to Read Conference (Washington, DC, May 27-29, 1978). For related documents see ED 190 997 and CS 006 442-449.
AVAILABLE FROM Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Cognitive Development; *Learning Theories; *Literacy; *Preschool Curriculum; Preschool Education; Reading Comprehension; *Reading Instruction; *Reading Processes

ABSTRACT

The second of eight related documents, this booklet is part of a series of papers presented at the 1978 National Right to Read Conference examining issues and problems in literacy. In its examination of the place of reading in the preschool curriculum, the booklet first explores different definitions of reading and develops a concept of the reading process. It then shows how distinct preschool reading programs will devolve from different concepts, not only of reading but also of maturation and instruction. The last section of the booklet espouses a constructivist view of cognitive development and an interactionist concept of reading, and suggests strategies that teachers might use to prepare children for reading, again insisting that comprehension of basic principles is the crucial factor. (HTH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED211936

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

LITERACY: MEETING THE CHALLENGE

How Should Reading Fit into a Preschool Curriculum?

Bernard Spodek

CS006443

The material in this booklet was prepared pursuant to a contract with the Right to Read Program. U.S. Office of Education, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Contractors undertaking such work are encouraged to express freely their professional judgments. The content does not necessarily reflect Office of Education policy or views.

The material in this booklet was presented at the National Right to Read Conference, Washington, D.C., May 27-29, 1978. The material was edited by the staff of the National Institute of Advanced Study which conducted the Conference under contract from the U.S. Office of Education.

FOREWORD

A major goal of the Right to Read Program has been to disseminate information about the status of literacy education, successful products, practices and current research finding in order to improve the instruction of reading. Over the years, a central vehicle for dissemination have been Right to Read conferences and seminars. In June 1978, approximately 350 Right to Read project directors and staff from State and local education and nonprofit agencies convened in Washington, D.C. to consider Literacy: Meeting the Challenge.

The conference focused on three major areas:

- examination of current literacy problems and issues
- assessment of accomplishments and potential resolutions regarding literacy issues; and
- exchange and dissemination of ideas and materials on successful practices toward increasing literacy in the United States.

All levels of education, preschool through adult, were considered.

The response to the Conference was such that we have decided to publish the papers in a series of individual publications. Additional titles in the series are listed separately as well as directions for ordering copies.

SHIRLEY A. JACKSON
Director,
Basic Skills Program

LITERACY MEETING THE CHALLENGE

A Series of Papers Presented at the National Right to Read Conference May 1978

Assessment of Reading Competencies
Donald Fisher

How Should Reading Fit Into a Pre-School Curriculum?
Bernard Spodex

Relating Literacy Development to Career Development
Allen B. Moore

Private Sector Involvement in Literacy Efforts

"The Corporate Model for Literacy Involvement"
Lily Fleming

"Reading Alternative: Private Tutoring Programs"
Daniel Bassill

"Building Intellectual Capital: The Role of Education in Industry"
Linda Stoker

Who is Accountable for Pupil Illiteracy?
Paul Tractenberg

Publishers' Responsibilities in Meeting the Continuing Challenge of Literacy
Kenneth Komoski

Can Public Schools Meet the Literacy Needs of the Handicapped?
Jules C. Abrams

The Basic Skills Movement: Its Impact on Literacy
Thomas Stitcht

Literacy: Competency and the Problem of Graduation Requirements
William G. Spady

Projections In Reading

"Teaching Reading in the Early Elementary Years"
Dorsey Hammond

"Adult Literacy"
Oliver Patterson

"Reading Programs: Grades Seven Through Twelve"
Harold Herber

OVERVIEW

One's answer to how reading should fit into a preschool curriculum will depend upon one's fundamental assumptions and convictions. Through an exploration of different definitions of reading, this paper first develops a concept of the reading process. It then shows how different concepts not only of reading, but of maturation and instruction imply distinct preschool reading programs and proposes that, like the models of early childhood education compatible with them, they derive from different ideologies. The last section, expressly espousing a constructivist view of cognitive development and an interactionist concept of reading, suggests strategies that teachers might use to prepare children for reading, again insisting that comprehension of basic principles is the crucial factor.

Definition of Reading

Observing that debates over programs often involve divergent concepts of the reading process, the author begins by surveying definitions and unfolding his own definition of reading. He adduces more and less restricted definitions in current use, relates reading to the other language processes, discusses the various clues to meaning that mature and beginning readers use, and lists the skills that beginning reading programs must inculcate. Lastly, he introduces three underlying concepts of the reading process, each exemplified by models and distinguishing a class of programs: the data driven, the conceptually driven, and the interactive, which mediates between the other two. In the course of this discussion, several basic propositions emerge:

- Reading involves comprehending meaning, not merely "decoding" or translating written symbols into spoken language.
- The reading process differs for mature and beginning readers.
- Educators need to understand the differences between early and mature reading processes and to use approaches that lead children to expect meaning from the printed page and to develop the battery of skills and the liveness to clues characteristic of mature readers.

Consequences of Conceptual Differences

Different preschool reading programs will devolve from different basic assumptions. A maturational view of readiness will lead educators to place some children into an early phase of the reading program, leaving others to develop further, while a nurture view of readiness will lead them to provide

experiences designed to prepare children for the reading program they will enter. Educators who believe in direct instruction will teach children what they want them to learn, while those who believe in indirect instruction will create situations in which children can learn it through their own actions. Wanting a sense of direction, many preschool educators effectually resign such decisions to publishers, merely following the program of the materials they receive. In response to the resulting abuses, a coalition of educational organizations has published a joint statement on Reading and Pre-First Grade, eleven of whose recommendations the author cites. He observes, however, that they do not constitute sufficient guidelines for a preschool reading program, since the question of what will conduce to success in a reading program remains open and will receive different answers from proponents of different models of reading instruction. Having contrasted the answers commensurate with the three models introduced earlier, the author goes on to suggest that the three models fit different models of early childhood education, and like them, reflect different ideologies. Thus, to select and implement a model rationally, one must clarify one's basic convictions about children, learning, development, and schools.

Preliminary Reading Activities

Many reading readiness skills can be developed within the normal framework of preschools, using materials ready to hand. The author suggests materials that teachers might use and activities that they might introduce to develop visual and auditory discrimination. He then describes four particular programs reported in the literature, observing that, since reading is a cognitive-linguistic activity, Piagetian theory can help other educators develop alternatives to the traditional strategies of reading instruction and that, since reading involves the interaction of data-driven and conceptually-driven processes, the range of potential strategies appropriate to preschool is great.

Conclusion

Children can be helped to construct a system of reading, as well as a system of understanding their physical and social world. The key to incorporating reading in the preschool curriculum will be a teaching staff who view reading as an interactionist process and who understand both the learning capabilities of children and the learning potentialities of activities.

HOW SHOULD READING FIT INTO A PRESCHOOL CURRICULUM?

For this conference on LITERACY: MEETING THE CHALLENGE, I was asked to prepare a paper titled: "How Should Reading Fit Into a Preschool Curriculum?" I was requested to prepare "a working model of the problem of literacy in our society and various approaches on ideas for their solution." I was not sure I could do this, but I accepted anyway. In preparing for the paper, I reviewed the proposed program of the conference to see how my topic might relate to others. At first, I thought that there would be a series of papers on curriculum continuity in reading instruction, starting with the early years of education, but this did not seem to be the case. It seemed as I read the preliminary program the conference developers felt that it was not reading instruction that was a problem, but everything else (e.g., preparation for that instruction, the materials of instruction, the evaluation of the instruction, etc.). I wondered about the purposes of the conference and my own role within it.

I was concerned with the context of the conference as well as with the motivation of those who invited me. I am not primarily a reading specialist: I do have some expertise in the curriculum of early childhood education. I assumed, therefore, that it was not the intent of the planners to have me propose technical devices for teaching reading early, but rather to address the issues of early reading from a policy standpoint. However, I found that it is difficult to separate policy from the procedural.

I also found that I had difficulty with the topic that I was given. A number of words bothered me; I was not sure what they meant.

For example, one of the key words in the topic is "preschool," which I take to mean "before school." Yet, if preschool happens before school, then the concern for curriculum seemed inappropriate (except, perhaps, in the limited sense of the "hidden curriculum" of the family as used by Strodtbeck in the 1960's). I did not think this was the intent of the planners. Rather I believe they expected me to address the issues of curriculum prior to the primary grades. The use of the term "preschool" I finally decided, was a throwback to the times when people thought that there was nothing to learn without reading, therefore school ought not to begin before reading instruction. Thus any education prior to that point in a child's life was considered "preschool education." Forgiving the planners, I shall talk about the preliminary curriculums, programs of the nursery school, day-care center, and kindergarten.

The second word in the topic that gave me difficulty was "reading." Reading is defined differently by different experts. Differences in conceptions of the reading process can lead to different prescriptions for curriculum. There is much controversy about the nature of reading and reading instruction, and this controversy seems as old as the history of inquiry into the teaching of reading. Neither logical discourse nor empirical data seems to persuade persons on one side of the controversy to shift to the other. It seems that ideological issues are at the base of the controversy. I felt that no logical arguments of my own would convince anyone here today and, so, while I will admit that many positions on reading and reading instruction exist, I will neither try to be evenhanded in my presentation, nor expect to persuade everyone that my point of view is *the* right one.

The third difficult word I found in the topic was "fit." Among the two dozen definitions for that word I found in the dictionary, two seemed most appropriate: "well adapted or suited" and "to be of the right size." In one sense, it could be argued that reading is an appropriate element for preprimary education. In the other sense it could be argued that reading can be accommodated in the current structure of preprimary education. The former sense of the word would lead to a discourse on propriety; the latter to a discourse on efficacy. Probably both could be addressed.

Given that analysis of my assigned topic, my understanding of it, my understanding of the context of the meeting and the purpose of my being asked here, I should like to address the following topics:

- Defining reading
- Teaching reading
- Fitting reading into the preschool
- A preprimary reading program.

Defining Reading

Some of the controversy about reading instruction arises from the way in which the reading process is defined. Some educators contend that it is basically a decoding process—learning the relationship between written symbols and spoken sounds. Once these associations are learned, the child is a reader. Since the young child already knows word meanings and processes in oral language, reading teachers need not worry about these. What the child does with the information gleaned from the written page is not considered the domain of reading. The goal of primary reading instruction, according to this point of view, is to provide children with the key letter-sound associations that will unlock the written code.

Although few will disagree with the need for the successful beginning reader to learn letter-sound associations, the reading process is more than "code

cracking." Different experts extend their interpretations of the reading process. Some claim that reading is "gaining meaning from the printed page." They take reading one step beyond the first approach, suggesting that interpreting the sounds associated with the letters is a part of the reading process and needs to be included in any reading program. They suggest that the derivation of meaning for the printed word, rather than "code cracking," be emphasized in any reading instructional program at anytime.

Still other experts suggest that the reading process is really an extension of intellectual processes, for the interpretation of meaning is a significant part of reading also. Critical reading, problem solving, and other complex processes need also to be included in any reading program, including beginning reading programs.

Frank Smith (1971) sees reading as gaining meaning from the printed word. He identifies two ways of achieving comprehension in reading. The first, *immediate comprehension*, is accomplished by going directly from the visual features of writing to their meaning. The second, *mediated comprehension*, requires a prior identification of words. The fluent reader reads primarily by way of immediate comprehension, using alternative sources of redundant information to speed the process along. This information comes from word forms, syntactical structures, and the context of words. Only when difficulties arise does the fluent reader use mediated comprehension.

Smith believes the problems of beginning readers are compounded by a lack of experience with the reading process and suggests that traditional programs allow them to achieve the experience they need to create personal rules of reading. The fact that the redundancy of information is used by mature readers may explain why different programs stressing different reading skills may be equally successful in teaching beginning reading.

These varied points of view are not contradictory, for they deal with the relationship of reading to the language and thinking process of the individual. It is quite possible that, as Smith suggests, the reading process is different at different age or grade levels. Preschool teachers need an understanding of the relationship between early and more mature processes to put preschool reading activities in the proper perspective. This is not merely a matter of task analysis.

Relationship of Reading to Language

There are four modes of language communication: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Reading is a part of the language process that deals with decoding written symbols. Although the written word in our language is derived from the spoken word, this does not mean that the reader must translate each word read into a word heard. Rather, once reading skill is

achieved, the individual has two parallel forms of receptive language available. In the early years of schooling, the child may have to move from the novel (for him) written symbol to the more familiar spoken symbol before meaning is achieved. At this point, the meanings gained from the written word are usually those the young child has already learned in relation to his knowledge of the spoken word. Only as he approaches maturity does his reading vocabulary outstrip his listening vocabulary. Few books developed for beginning reading instruction under any system contain a vocabulary that is beyond the listening vocabulary of the children for whom the book is designed. In some cases, advocates of the code-cracking approach to reading have described very young children reading Shakespearian plays or other similarly sophisticated written matter. This is a distortion of the reading process, for few reading experts at any level would support a child's learning to read to the exclusion of understanding.

Defining the process of reading does not solve the issues inherent in providing a reading program, though it is a necessary first step. The crucial issues relate to how the child can best learn the reading process. Is meaningful or meaningless material best for teaching the code-cracking system? This is one question that even the proponents of "phonics only" or linguistic approaches to reading raise. Another relates to the appropriateness of using cues other than letter-sound associations in gaining meaning from the printed page. Yet other issues relate to the form, organization, and materials of instruction in reading. Some of these issues need to be clarified to understand the process of reading. Other issues relate to the prerequisites for successful reading instruction.

The Reading Process

Even in its simplest form, the reading process seems to involve a broad range of perceptual, associative, and cognitive elements. While these processes may be analyzed and described separately, they are intertwined so that the individual does not practice each one separately as he reads. Nor is reading simply a matter of making a series of letter-sound associations. The scene of the preschool child roaming the aisles of a supermarket and identifying and reciting labels of packages made familiar through television commercials is not unusual. Although this might not be labeled *reading* much early reading seems to mirror this process, for in attempting to gain meaning from the written page, the young child uses a variety of approaches and clues.

[For an interesting discussion about the relationship of reading to language from a number of viewpoints, see Irene J. Athey, "Language Models and Reading"; Doris R. Entwhistle, "Implications of Language Socialization for Reading Models and Learning to Read"; and Ronald Wardhaugh, "Theories of Language Acquisition in Relation to Beginning Reading Instruction." *Reading Research Quarterly*, vol. 7, no. 1 (Fall 1971).]

Young children can learn a reasonable number of words without using any analytic techniques. The associative learning technique used in the "look-say" method has proved successful and is probably responsible for the very young child being able to read product labels. The continually repeated association between the picture of the product and its name on television helps the child learn the words and recall them when he sees the symbol. Other techniques can be used for associating visual cues with the sounds of words.

The shapes of beginning and ending letters provide clues to the word. Using these visual cues, the child can be helped to make the association between the written symbol and the spoken word. Children also learn to use a word's context as a clue to reading it. The structure of the language and the meaning of phrases have a degree of regularity that creates a fairly high chance of success in the use of context clues.

As the child begins reading instruction he learns other techniques of word recognition. Structural analysis—the breaking of large words into their parts—is an important one. Phonetic analysis, one way the child can identify letter-sound associations, is another important technique. Phonetic analysis is not the *only* method, however, that the young child can use in learning to read, nor is it necessarily the first. It would be unfortunate if we did not provide the child with as many different ways of unlocking the mystery of the written word as he can use, for it is the synthesis of many skills that helps make a competent reader.

It is important to note that word identification, although important, is just one part of beginning reading. Meanings must become evident to the child. He must associate the written words with the spoken words and move quickly from reading *symbols* to reading *ideas*.

John Carroll (1970) has identified the necessary elements of a reading instructional program. He suggests that the disagreements about how reading should be taught are actually disagreements about the order in which these skills should be taught. The skills identified are:

1. The child must know the language that he is going to learn to read.
2. The child must learn to dissect spoken words into component sounds.
3. The child must learn to recognize and discriminate the letters of the alphabet in their various forms.
4. The child must learn the left-to-right principle by which words are spelled and put in order in continuous text.
5. The child must learn that there are patterns of highly probable correspondence between letters and sounds.

6. The child must learn to recognize printed words from whatever cues he can use.

7. The child must learn that printed words are signals for spoken words and that they have meanings analogous to those spoken words.

8. The child must learn to reason and think about what he reads (pp. 31-33).

The many different beginning reading programs available have been categorized in a number of ways. Differences among the program have been identified in the stress placed by each program on letter-sound association, on the relationship of reading instruction to the total language arts program, and on the way in which the pattern of instruction is organized in each. (Spodek, 1978)

Adams, Andersen and Durkin (1978) distinguish beginning reading programs by the underlying conception of the reading process. Some programs are labelled as "data driven," some as "conceptually driven," and some as "interactive." In the data driven programs the reader attends to the letters and develops expectations from the words spelled out by them. These expectations are built upon as the reader deals with larger units, going from words to phrases to sentences. They see this as a "bottom-up" process.

Philip Gough (1972), for example, proposed a linear model of the reading process which can be considered data driven. Reading proceeds from letter identification to word construction to phonemic representation. Syntactic and semantic rules are applied to form meanings.

In the conceptually driven programs, the reader uses his knowledge of the language to approach reading by testing hypotheses against what is printed. Context and syntax provide the reader with important cues for developing hypotheses. This psycholinguistic approach to reading is characterized as "top-down" processing.

Goodman (1968) has proposed such a "top-down" model of reading in which a child moves through three stages or proficiency levels. At the highest level, the focus is on meaning with decoding becoming automatic.

The third approach to reading sees both top-down and bottom-up processing occurring simultaneously. Hence, the characterization as interactive. Within this conception the reader is as much dependent upon what he already knows as upon what the author has put in the text for gaining meaning from the printed page. Both conceptually-driven and interactive conceptions of reading view the process as something more than decoding, while the data driven conception sees reading as a process of changing written language into its oral counterpart.

Rumelhart has developed an interactive model which conceives of reading as utilizing both "top-down" and "bottom-up" processing. Both the context of the visual stimuli as well as the stimuli themselves are used by the reading within this model.

Many of the traditional reading programs found in schools today use a data driven approach to reading in the primary grades. Only after decoding skills are established do these programs attend to the meaning and context of what is read. Many of the standardized tests used to assess reading achievement reflect these programs. Children in the early grades are tested with items that sample their decoding ability. As the children move into the intermediate grades there is a shift to increasing the number of items that sample comprehension ability.

In my own community, the pattern of test scores show the children doing relatively well in reading achievement in the second grade. In the intermediate grades, the patterns of test scores does not look as well and many of the children who are doing poorly in reading are doing worse. The school system provides remedial work for these poor readers. But this remedial work focuses on decoding skills. Seldom do the children who need remediation ever overcome that need. (By the way, this does not seem to be an isolated case. I have heard of similar patterns in other districts.)

In a similar vein, a colleague of mine reported pilot data in which he found the poorer readers persisted in the reading task focussing on decoding the passages much longer than better readers. The reading material provided became systematically more meaningless through the manipulation of both syntax and vocabulary. (Canney, 1978 personal communication) It was as if the poorer reader did not have an expectation of gaining meaning from the printed page.

This is consistent with Frank Smith's (1977) suggestion that reading failure occurs when a child sees no sense in what is involved in learning to read. In many cases, it seems that the programs of beginning reading, that deny a concern for meaning from the beginning, might themselves be the cause of reading failure for some children. It is no wonder that "more of the same" does not alleviate that failure.

Fitting Reading into the Preschool

Whether you would fit reading into the preschool, how you would fit reading into the preschool, and what of reading you would fit into the preschool, depends upon your view of reading, instruction, learning, and readiness. If you assume a maturational view of readiness, you could assess each young child's level of maturity, putting those who are ready into an early phase of the reading program and allowing the others to ripen further. If,

however, you maintain a "nurture" view of readiness, you might provide a set of experiences for children prior to the formal reading program to increase the probability of their success in that program when it is finally offered.

If you believe in direct instruction, you might teach those things you want children to learn, either as preparation for reading or actual reading itself, in a straightforward manner. If you believe in indirect instruction, you might create experiences to help the children acquire as a result of their own actions what you consider to be desirable. The options available are not merely "director versus incidental teaching" as King (1978) suggests, but choices of what to teach as well as direct vs. indirect and planned vs. incidental teaching.

In many cases, teachers' decisions about what to teach children about reading prior to first grade are made by default. Not being sure themselves of what to teach, they rely on the publishers of reading series, or others who have prepared prepackaged materials, often in the form of workbooks and worksheets. Decisions about content and sequence of instruction are made by those preparing the materials. The responsibility is to carefully herd the pupils through each page; progress is self-evident.

The abuses of such an approach have led to a number of organizations, including: EKNE, ACEL, ASCD, IRA, NAEYC, NAESP, and NCTE to publish a joint statement on Reading and Pre-First Grade(1977). The recommendations of these groups include the following:

Recommendations:

1. Provide reading experiences as an integrated part of the broader communication process that includes listening, speaking, and writing. A language experience approach is an example of such integration.
2. Provide for a broad range of activities both in scope and in content. Include direct experiences that offer opportunities to communicate in different settings with different persons.
3. Foster children's affective and cognitive development by providing materials, experiences, and opportunities to communicate what they know and how they feel.
4. Continually appraise how various aspects of each child's total development affects his/her reading development.
5. Use evaluative procedures that are developmentally appropriate for the children being assessed and that reflect the goals and objectives of the instructional program.
6. Insure feelings of success for all children in order to help them see themselves as persons who can enjoy exploring language and learning to read.

7. Plan flexibility in order to accommodate a variety of learning styles and ways of thinking.

8. Respect the language the child brings to school, and use it as a base for language activities.

9. Plan activities that will cause children to become active participants in the learning process rather than passive recipients of knowledge.

10. Provide opportunities for children to experiment with language and simply to have fun with it.

11. Require that preservice and inservice teachers of young children be prepared in the teaching of reading in a way that emphasizes reading as an integral part of the language arts as well as the total curriculum.

While the fact that a group of organizations would band together to publish such a statement jointly is important, neither the statement nor the recommendations themselves provide adequate guidelines for a pre-first grade reading program. If you do not accept the "ripening" view of development, then you need to look at the content of the selected reading program, determine what a child needs to know to succeed within it, and provide learning opportunities for young children to gain these prerequisites.

For a conceptually driven model of reading instruction, one needs to provide the children with as broad a range of language experience as well as experiences with the real world as is possible. The depth of personal knowledge about the world allows children to develop concepts they can draw on to interpret meanings, knowledge of the language gives the children a better base from which to derive hypotheses about the meanings of sets of printed symbols.

For a data driven model of reading instruction, a range of prerequisite skills are usually listed for successfully learning to read. These include such skills as visual discrimination, auditory discrimination, left-to-right sequencing, developing associations, and so forth.

For an interactive view of reading, both the skills and the linguistic-cognitive background is important. Smith (1977) suggests that two other insights need to underlay beginning reading: (1) children need to realize that print is a meaningful, and (2) children need to be aware that the written language is different from the spoken language. In all cases a desire to read is important. In an article I wrote a couple of years ago, "Early Childhood Education and Teacher Education: A Search for Consistency," I suggested that early childhood education models differ essentially on ideological grounds (beliefs, assumptions). The same is true for models of reading education. The conceptually driven models of reading would fit quite well with a Bank Street model as well as a traditional child development model of

early childhood education. The data driven models of reading instruction would fit quite well with a Behavior Analysis or Engelmann-Becker model of early childhood education. The interactive model of reading instruction would fit well with a Piagetian Open Education approach on early childhood education. Thus, before you decide what to do in early childhood reading it might be helpful to know what you really believe about children, learning, development and schools. Then you could choose a model rationally and select appropriate activities to meet the needs and abilities of the children.

I would like to suggest a set of experiences that seem to me to be appropriate for pre-first grade children and important elements of a beginning reading program.

A Preliminary Reading Program

Many reading readiness skills can be provided for in the normal framework of a nursery school, day-care center or kindergarten. Many nursery and kindergarten classrooms include a wealth of materials that help children develop visual discrimination skills. In using parquetry puzzles, they must relate the shape of each piece to the shape of the space in which it is to be inserted and to the rest of the picture. Pegsets, beads, strings, and similar materials can also be used in teaching visual discrimination. Teachers can develop design cards for children to model. A simple pattern of one red and one blue peg alternating along the length of a line of holes in the pegboard is one that children can model, with more complex patterns following. Similar patterns can be made with beads on a string. A series of cards beginning with simple patterns and including complex designs, and design cards used with parquetry blocks of different shapes and colors, are other models. These can be used at the children's own pace, with more complex tasks being offered as they succeed in the simpler tasks.

Children can also be asked to copy specific patterns from models using crayons or pencils. Etch-a-Sketch is a complicated task since it requires coordination of both hands. Form discrimination tasks can be given to children, starting with simple geometric forms on form boards and continuing to writing letters with letter templates. A number of visual discrimination and perceptual motor programs are available on the market that may be used for this purpose.

As children learn to discriminate letters, they should also learn the names of letters. Not only is this a good reading readiness task but it also improves communication between teacher and child by providing the class with a common verbal referent. Although copying patterns and filling in outlines are suggested here, none of these activities are to be considered as a substitute for an art program concerned with creative expression.

There are many opportunities to teach auditory discrimination skills. Music, for example, affords many opportunities for this, since the child must distinguish and reproduce pitch in music as well as learn to listen to the words of songs. Instruments can be provided to allow the children to recreate patterns of sound that differ in pitch and rhythm according to models provided by the teacher. Again this is not to be considered a substitute for a creative music program.

A number of other techniques for auditory discrimination exist. Books such as the *Muffin* series can be read to make children more aware of sounds. There are many records and sound filmstrips that can be similarly used—for example *Sounds Around Us* (Guidance Associates). Teachers can also create games for teaching listening skills such as sound recognition and discrimination. They may make their own auditory discrimination materials using tape recorders or a *Language Master*.

Most importantly, teachers need to make children more aware of the sounds they hear in the language around them. Word sound can be the basis for much fun, because children enjoy alliteration and rhyming. While many opportunities for learning may be found in the classroom, teachers should be aware of the need to exploit situations as they arise as well as to create situations for particular purposes.

There are a host of other reading related activities that are appropriate for inclusion in a pre-first grade program. Sandberg and Pohlman (1976) describe a laboratory school program for four- and five-year-olds which includes a host of activities to support learning to read. Connections are built between written and spoken language. Signs, labels and charts are used by teachers and children throughout the program. Each child develops his own collection of words which are written on separate pieces of paper and kept in a manila envelope. Books are available for children to read or be read to and a host of other activities are included.

A strong conceptual-language program can also help children develop generalized readiness for reading. O'Donnell and Raymond (1972) reported on such a program based upon kindergarten proposals developed by Robinson and Spodek in *New Directions in the Kindergarten* (1965). This program resulted in greater gains on readiness tests and other measures than did the use of standard readiness workbooks. As a result of the program, the teachers became diagnosticians, able to assess individual children's strengths and weaknesses, and provide appropriate instruction individually and in small groups.

Piagetian theory of cognitive development has provided us with alternative modes of viewing the reading process and of suggesting activities that can help children become readers. Unfortunately, all too often Piagetian theory has

been used to assess the readiness of children to benefit from traditional reading instructional tasks (see, for example, Elkind, 1974, Cox, 1976 and Kirkland, 1978). Since reading is a cognitive-linguistic activity, Piaget's work can help educators understand the process of reading and develop strategies to help children read in other than traditional ways.

Building from Piagetian theory, Schickendanz (1977) has developed strategies for using dramatic play to help children approach reading. Dramatic play is symbolic play. Children reenact roles and activities in play settings. They use themselves, other persons and objects to stand for different things. Language is used to structure and sustain the play. A range of strategies have been suggested for teachers to extend and sustain the range of reading and language-related activities in dramatic play settings. The use of play as a means for teaching reading is further sustained by a study by Wolfgang (1974) of the relationship between levels of play and competence in readers among young children.

Finally, one obvious activity must be suggested in a reading program for children: reading to them. The admonition to read to young children as preparation for their later learning to read has become popular in recent years. This is suggested because successful readers consistently report having been read to by their parents. This "reading to" is often translated into a pre-first grade activity in which the teacher regularly reads to a group of children *en masse*. Hoskisson (1977) and Schickendanz (1977) suggest that this is an inappropriate strategy and that the wrong elements of the parent-child reading situation are being translated into school programs. The elements of the reading situation that allow reading as information processing to develop are excluded in the mass reading strategy.

Schickendanz suggests a strategy where stories are read to children one-on-one, and where the child is allowed to see the print in the book, and to help turn pages. The same books are read repeatedly so that a story line can be memorized by the children. Adults periodically point to words as they say them, or ask children to say them. There is also free access to books for the children and listening posts with records or tapes of stories available along with the books for the children.

Hoskisson recommends a more formal strategy containing many of these same elements in a process he calls "assisted reading." At about age four or five, the child is ready for this process. In assisted reading the adult (teacher or parent) reads phrases or sentences and the child repeats these. Books and stories are read and reread in this way as the adult moves his finger slowly under the lines that are read. At some point children will be encouraged to read words they recognize before the adult reads them. In the final stage the child is encouraged to read independently with the adults supplying words that they anticipate the child will not know. The process of moving from *being read to* to *reading* occurs as a result of hypotheses the children develop and test in relation to the written language they see and have heard repeatedly.

While the Hoskisson proposal contains a number of control techniques not found in the work of Schickendanz, both approach the reading task as a total cognitive process. Assuming a cognitive-linguistic conception of reading based upon the interaction of data-driven and conceptually-driven processes, a range of other strategies could be developed and incorporated into a pre-first grade class.

Conclusion

To finish up, let me try to answer directly the question raised in the title of this presentation: How should reading fit into a preschool curriculum? The answer I would like to offer is: "Comfortably."

Conceptions of reading instrtuction are parallel in their underlying assumptions to conceptions of early childhood curriculum. An interactionist view of the reading process is consistent with a constructivist view of the development of knowledge that I feel comfortable in supporting as a basis for early childhood curriculum. Children can be helped to construct a system of reading just as they can be helped to construct a system of understanding and interpreting their physical and social world. Activities that support learning to read can fit (are appropriate) in an activity-oriented pre-first grade class. The key to successful integration of reading into the program would be the staffing of these classrooms with teachers who have an understanding of the reading process as an interactionist process, who are sensitive to the learning capabilities of the children, and who are knowledgeable of the learning potentialities of the various activities they can provide.

REFERENCES

Adams, M.J., R.C. Anderson, and D. Durkin. Beginning reading: theory and practice. *Language Arts*, 1978, *55*(1), 19-25.

Canney, G. Personal Communications, 1978.

Carroll, J.B. The nature of the reading process in D.V. Gunderson (ed.) *Language and Reading*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1970.

Cox, M.B. The effect of conservation ability on reading competency. *Reading Teacher*, 1978, *30*(3) 251-258.

Durkin, D. *Teaching Young Children to Read*. 2nd edition. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1976.

Elkind, D. Cognitive Development and Reading. *Claremont Reading Conference Yearbook*, 1974, *38*, 251-258.

Goodman, K.S. *The Psycholinguistic Nature of the Reading Process*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1968.

Gough, P.B. One second of reading in J.F. Kavanaugh, and I.G. Mattingly. *Language by Ear and by Eye*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1972.

Hoskisson, K. Reading readiness: three viewpoints. *Elementary School Journal*, 1977, *78*(1) 44–52.

Kirkland, E.R. A Piagetian interpretation of beginning reading instruction. *Reading Teacher*, 1978, *31*(5) 497–503.

O'Donnell, C.M. and D. Raymond. Developing reading readiness in the kindergarten. *Elementary English*, 1972, *49*(5),768–771.

_____. Reading and pre-first grade. *Young Children* 1977, *32*(1) 25–26.

Robison, H.F. and B. Spodek. *New Directions in the Kindergarten*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1965.

Rumelhart, D.E. *Toward an Interactive Model of Reading*. San Diego: Center for Human Information Processing, University of California at San Diego, 1976.

Sandberg, J.H. and J.D. Pohlman. Reading on the child's terms. *Young Children*, 1976, *31*(2), 106–112.

Schickendanz, J.A. *Cognitive Theory, Story Reading and Learning to Read*. Boston University, 1977a.

_____. *Using Symbolic Props in Play: A Curriculum Guide and Discussion*. Boston University, 1977b.

Smith, F. Making sense of reading—and of reading instruction. *Harvard Education Review*, 1977, *47*(3), 386–395.

_____. *Understanding Reading*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971.

Spodek, B. Early Childhood Education and Teacher Education: A Search for Consistency. *Young Children*. *30*(3), 168–174.

_____. *Teaching in the Early Years*. 2nd edition. Englewood Cliffs, N.J. Prentice-Hall, 1978.

Wolfgang, C. An exploration of the relationship between the cognitive area of reading and selected developmental aspects of children's play. *Psychology in the Schools*, 1974, *11*(3), 338–343.

☆ U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1980 O—302-474